



Testimony in Support of SB 443
Testimony by Citizens Campaign for the Environment
Louis W. Burch, Government Relations

March 17, 2014
Hartford, CT

Senator Meyer, Representative Gentile, esteemed members of the CGA Environment Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Louis Burch, government relations liaison for Citizens Campaign for the Environment (CCE). Supported by over 80,000 members in Connecticut and New York State, CCE works to empower communities and advocate solutions that protect public health and the natural environment. CCE would like to offer the following testimony in support of SB 443:

SB 443- AAC pesticides on school grounds, parks, playgrounds, athletic fields and municipal greens (CONDITIONALLY SUPPORTIVE)

CCE supports the concept of this legislation, with recommendations to clarify certain definitions to ensure proper implementation of this landmark proposal. It is well documented that exposure to pesticides can increase an individual's risk of developing neurological, respiratory and endocrine disorders. Long-term exposure to pesticides has also been linked to a number of cancers, including non-Hodgkin lymphoma. Children are more susceptible to the dangers of pesticide exposure than adults, due to their small size and rapidly developing bodies, proximity to the ground, and tendency to engage in frequent hand to mouth behaviors.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, National Academy of Sciences, and American Public Health Association, among others, recognize the danger that exposure to pesticides pose to children's health, and all recommend eliminating these exposures wherever possible. Connecticut established itself as a nationwide leader on this critical issue in 2005, by prohibiting the use of toxic pesticides on school playing fields grades K-6. That policy was expanded in 2007 to include middle schools playing fields, and again in 2009 to include day care facilities. **Since these protections have been enacted, municipalities across the state have successfully eliminated the use of toxic pesticides on school playing fields, while cost-effectively managing pest problems on school playing fields.**

Certain towns in Connecticut have already gone above and beyond what the law requires by opting for non-toxic approaches to maintaining all school playing fields, playgrounds and municipal greens. In fact, a recent survey of municipal parks and recreations personnel from around the state conducted by CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) revealed that towns using separate models for managing their school playing fields and their municipal fields may experience a greater level of difficulty implementing the law than a town using a consistent non-toxic turf care regiment on all high-traffic fields.¹

The ban on toxic pesticides for K-8 schools should be expanded to protect students on all school green spaces, public parks and playing fields, where children's exposure rates are high. Heavy physical activities such as sports and exercise lead to heavy breathing, which can also increase a child's risk of inhaling toxic pesticides. Fortunately, effective and affordable alternatives to pesticides exist and are widely available. It is clear that pests and weeds can be managed successfully with readily available and affordable non-toxic alternatives, and that towns and school districts that eliminate the use of chemical pesticides can also benefit from long-term financial savings.²

CCE supports this legislation's intent to keep dangerous pesticides away from areas where children learn and play, but strongly recommends amending the definition of *Controlling Authority* contained in Sec. 3(6) to ensure that a determination of whether or not a pest problem constitutes a significant public health threat may only be made by the local health director, the Commissioner of Public Health, or a designee thereof and not by the head of any municipal department charged with the maintenance of parks, playgrounds, athletic fields and municipal greens.

CCE strongly supports expanding the current state law to create a uniform, comprehensive non-toxic turf care policy for all school grounds, parks, playgrounds, athletic fields and municipal greens in Connecticut, and respectfully urges this committee to address this important distinction before passing this legislation.

On behalf of our members in Connecticut, we appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony and look forward to working with you on this important issue.

¹ "What We Heard from You: Municipal Roundtable Discussions" (CT DEEP, M. McCleary) February, 2014)

² "A Cost Comparison of Conventional Turf Management and Natural Turf Management for School Athletic Fields" (C. Osborne & D. Wood, 2010)